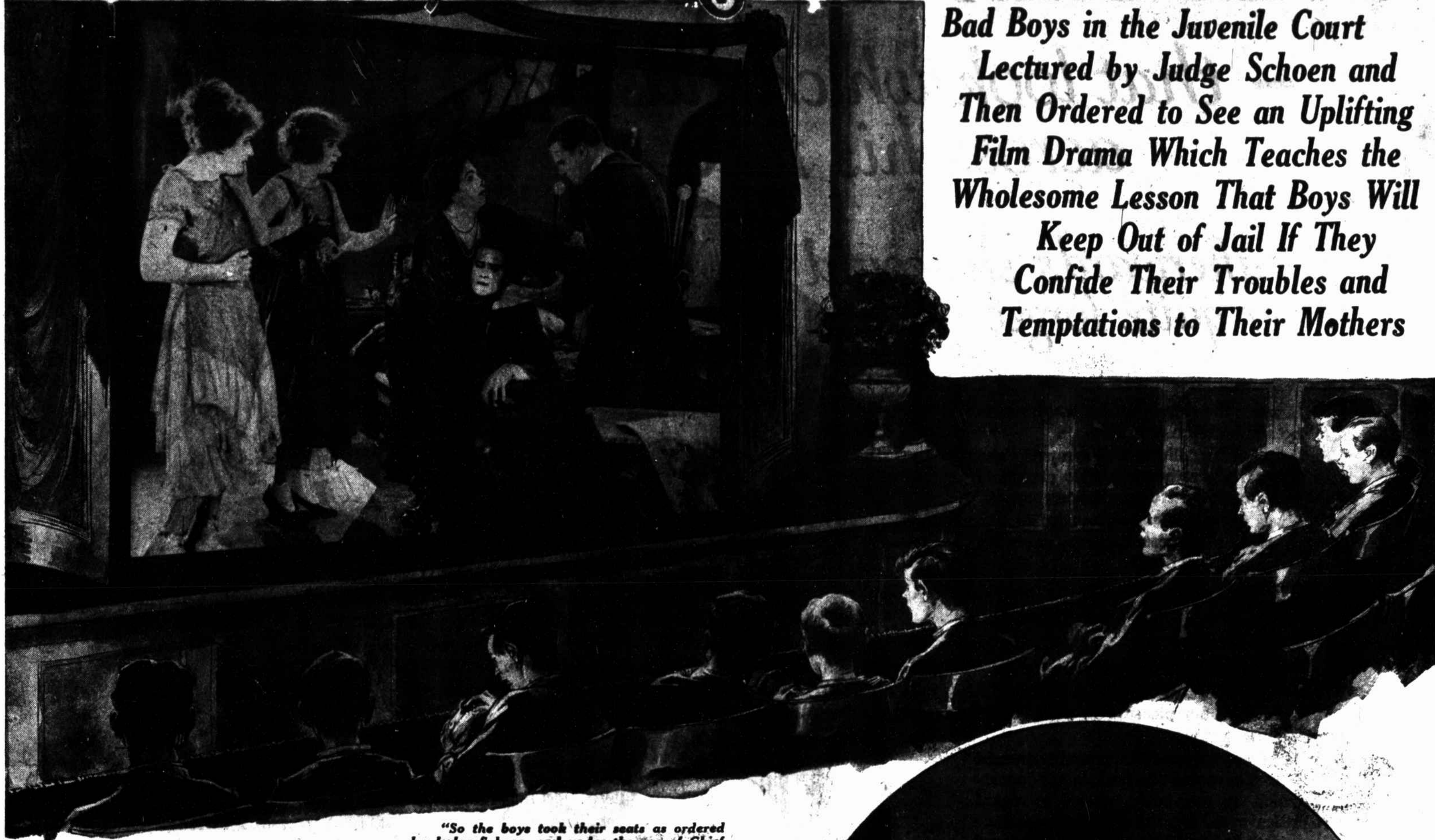


Sentenced by the Judge to Go to the Movies

**Bad Boys in the Juvenile Court
Lectured by Judge Schoen and
Then Ordered to See an Uplifting
Film Drama Which Teaches the
Wholesome Lesson That Boys Will
Keep Out of Jail If They
Confide Their Troubles and
Temptations to Their Mothers**



"So the boys took their seats as ordered by Judge Schoen, and under the eye of Chief Probation Officer Gascoyne gave careful attention to the story as it was unfolded on the screen and impressed the lesson that 'A Boy's Best Friend Is His Mother.'"

A WOMAN, gray haired and motherly plump, threw her arms around the shoulders of her wayward son who had come home a hunted thief, tore from her throat and fingers jewels to make restitution for what he had stolen, and gave her son a new start in life.

One hundred boys witnessed this great sacrifice. Some of these boys liked to be known as "hard guys." All of them had faced a police court judge for youthful escapades in crime or other misdemeanors. But that aged mother's willingness to sell everything she had for her son's welfare gave those boys a new angle on life—something they had never thought of before.

For many it was the first time a mother's love had been brought home in a way they could understand. And all showed effects of the lesson. Every one of those young lawbreakers who saw that scene made up his mind to "go straight" in the future.

This is how it happened. Edward Schoen, judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court at Newark, N. J., had an inspiration and resolved to try out an experiment he had been considering for some time.

In his career on the bench the stumbling confessions of wrong doings from youthful lips had been a weekly occurrence. And his knowledge of devious methods by which most young offenders commenced a career of crime was increased by his former services as prosecuting attorney for Essex County before he was elevated to the bench.

If experience is entitled to consideration, the reasons, given by Judge Schoen, why young boys eventually become old crooks could lightly be put aside. Here, in brief, are his ideas:

"Children are no better than the homes they come from," and

"The home is what the mother makes it." That is why a few days ago, when the time for his experiment came to hand, that the judge sent for Chief Probation Officer John C. Gascoyne to ask him for a list of all the wayward boys in his care. Then the judge selected a hundred names and ordered that these boys be brought before him in the court on the following morning.

Next day the boys trailed in—a heterogeneous group of youthful delinquents comprising nearly every nationality in Newark. They faced the judge with the idea that some drastic punishment was to be measured out to them. Then Judge Schoen pronounced this strange sentence:

"Boys, I am going to give you an opportunity to see for yourselves why you should be good. Many of you here are capable of much more good than even you yourselves imagine. It is the decision of the court that each one of you be sentenced to go to the movies.

"You will see a picture of a mother and will learn from it how far a mother

will go to protect her son or daughter from punishment for their own sins. Boys, your mothers are suffering every time you step from the straight path, and suffer only as a mother can suffer for her children. None of you realize—you would not be here to-day if you did—how much pain you are giving your mothers when you are bad, sinful or wayward.

"Some of you have absolutely no respect for your parents. You yell down every attempt your mother makes to advise you. You call her a 'back number.' You say that she does not know anything. I am looking at some boys here who I know have even struck their mothers. Boys, listen to me. Even though your mother may be unable to talk English as well as you, even though she may be poor or old, she loves you better than anyone else in the world. She is the real sufferer whenever you break the law. She is your best friend."

"Imagine being sent to the movies," "to be taken to one of the best picture shows in town," "and the judge thought he was punishing us," "gee, that was rich." These were some of the thoughts that raced through the boys' minds as they left the County Court house at Market and Springfield streets. They had been ordered to report to Mr. Gascoyne and to be escorted by his assistants to see the picture.

"That judge is a nut," one of them was heard to say.

"Ain't it rich to strike something as easy as this?" uttered another.

But a few hours later they sat in the front seats in a darkened house and a picture was flashed on the screen. The boys saw the story of a mother's heart torn by the waywardness of her own children. One son brought home to her a flapper wife and an ambitious mother-in-law who was spending his money with a careless hand, while the boy was struggling upward to win his place as a lawyer and public official. This discontented wife squandered every cent until the son, unknown to his wife, turned to his own mother to get the money to pay his bills.

And then, when success as a lawyer seemed to be coming his way, her other son confessed that he had stolen from his employer's cash box and was about to feel the hand of the law on his shoulders. Then the mother gave up her jewels to save her son from jail and was turned upon by her daughter-in-law for squandering her own money.

As the picture unfolded the plot, the probation officers who sat with the delinquent children noticed a change in their demeanor. From gleefulness their youthful charges' thoughts seemed to change to sorrow and when it was all over the boys trooped out and were taken to their homes. But on that homeward journey they did not chatter so freely as they had when they started for the theatre. The lesson was sinking in.

The following day many of the boys,

contrite and effusive in their promises to repair the wrongs they had committed, came to see Mr. Gascoyne and Judge Schoen, to thank them for opening their eyes, as they said, to many things they had never before given a thought to.

When seen by a representative of this newspaper and asked the results of his experiment and reason why he had chosen such an unusual method to reach the boys' hearts, Judge Schoen said:

"With the exception of a few isolated cases, careers of crime begin at an early age. There are several reasons for its start. Bad companions and a dangerous environment. Among girls we notice a yearning for finery, for riches, for ease, and sometimes the desire to give their youthful emotions free vent. In all cases I noticed what we call lack of moral fibre. And this must be instilled into their minds if they are to give up their waywardness.

The home is the place to cultivate a good moral character, and in homes where it is lacking we usually find our young criminals. It is obvious the basic cause of most youthful delinquency is the lack of parental respect, which always culminates in a decadence of morals, and crime is the next step."

Delighted with the seeming success of his experiment with the boys, Judge Schoen decided to try it on an altogether different class—a class not criminal, but a class very troublesome to society—dissatisfied husbands and wives. The day after the boys showed him that his first experiment was happily successful, he picked at random ten discontented couples who appeared before him in the Domestic Relations Court to have their marital affairs straightened out. The marriage question in the picture Judge Schoen was using as a lecture plays a part as graphic as the boy and mother situation.

As each couple appeared before him, the judge, after listening to their troubles, gave this friendly advice:

"Now, before you go any further with this, allow me to suggest a way of settling differences which I know, after hearing your story, are rather imaginary. There's a picture playing in town in which a situation is created which, while not exactly parallel to yours, contains many of its elements. I'm going to give you free passes to the theatre where the picture I have mentioned is playing and ask, yes, plead that you go to see it. I think after you have witnessed the picture and digested its story you will be in a different frame of mind than you are now.

"The spirit of solemnity that marriage should be entered into is never considered; you wish to give up when your home life becomes distasteful. You forget that when you were made man and wife that you assumed a sacred obligation that cannot be dissolved for your own selfish purposes. You make no sacrifices for your children, or children to come. When dissolution begins, they are forgotten. Do

A Group of Young Delinquents Brought Before Judge Schoen in His Juvenile Court in Newark.

you ever think of your mothers or fathers? Did they feel about things as you do? Forget your differences for a while and see the picture as I advise."

According to Judge Schoen this experiment proved as successful as the first, not a single couple returned to continue their initial attempt at separation.

"You must realize," the judge said, in explaining his ideas, "that, for the most part, the cases coming before me in both the Juvenile Court and the Court of Domestic Relations involve people, some of whom are not of high mental calibre. The spoken or written word does not penetrate their minds as it would those of cultured persons. For a long time I have been searching around for a proper medium to bring home to this class of delinquents the wholesome lessons of life.

"Mere admonitions or lectures do not suffice, nor does punishment always check them in their wayward trend. Of course, like others, I have thought of the movies and have been on the alert for a picture that would convey the proper moral in such a way as to favorably affect even the most case-hardened delinquent. The picture I have used in my experiments with the boys and the dissatisfied couples

carried just the thoughts I considered necessary to open their eyes to the true state of affairs into which they had drifted.

"To people of certain mental types the moving picture is the best conveyor of impressions. It is a power for good or for bad. I was favorably impressed by the picture I used in my experiments and thought it the very thing to carry the needed message to people with whom I deal in my daily work."

"In some of the homes of the boys entangled in the law's mesh there is, besides a lack of religious and moral atmosphere, absolutely no parental respect. The home life does not create it. How can you expect a boy or a girl having no respect for their parents to heed their advice, if there ever be such advice given, and go the righteous way?

"Contempt follows disrespect, and when contempt comes, love jumps out of the window. And then crime. All this the picture showed in sequence and, besides, the working of a mother's heart. To a certain extent the father is responsible for the creation of respect, but the mother is more responsible than the man, and whenever she breaks down the walls of respect the father has created then she and she only can be blamed for her children's sins.

"After the boys had seen the picture they all came to me and thanked me for the opportunity to see for themselves what it meant for a mother to have a wayward son.

"However, not all the boys come from homes where the mother reigns in the light of a queen of love. Some children are entirely irresponsible for the things for which they are under probationary supervision; the mothers are to blame. But the picture throws a halo around the mother and the boys impressed by it will have a change of heart toward their mothers, who, in turn, noticing the changed attitude of the children will themselves be impressed and be better fitted for the responsibility of their positions. 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' is no longer an applicable axiom. It should be, 'Spare the rod and send them to the movies.'"